



THE MORTICIANS are popular with teen-agers as a rock and roll combo. They are Door county youths and from left are: Dan Dufek on the electric organ; Tom Berns

(kneeling) on the guitar; Don (Spike) Birmingham on guitar; Mark Baudhuin on the drum and Phil Lampereur, guitar. - Harmann (Aug 1966)

Morticians have a 'live' beat

The Morticians of Sturgeon Bay are one of the popular teenage rock and roll combos in the Sturgeon Bay and surrounding area.

They are comprised of Don Birmingham on the guitar, also the leader of the group; Mark Baudhuin on the drums; Phil Lampereur, guitar; Dan Dufek, too plays the electric organ, and Tom Berns, lead guitar. The group was formed at Southern Door high school and their first formal engagement was at the Sadie Hawkins dance held in the Southern Door high school in October 1965.

Larry Eifert, formerly lead guitar and soloist, is no longer with the combo. At one time he played with a band in Springfield, Ill. Danny Dufek got into the act in December of 1965 and Don (better known as Spike) Birmingham, joined the group-March of this year.

Spike is now acknowledged as the leader of the bunch and in addition to playing guitar, driving their "bus" and getting engagements, he does some of the singing. Phil and Tom also do some of the vocalizing when they play at teenage dances.

The oldest of the group is Spike, who is also the only one who is married. He has a son about a year old. The others are still in high school or have just graduated this past June. The combo plays rock and roll, rhythm and blues compositions, including modern songs. None of

the group uses sheet music as they all play by ear. However, Danny can read music and so can Tom, who used to play the piano.

Danny is able to play a number of musical instruments and played in the Southern Door high school band for a couple years, as did Mark. Dan also is the organist at Salem Lutheran church and plays regularly for services there.

Not using sheet music, the group relies on the radio and records for their scores. After having heard a song they can sit down and beat out the tune with the best of them. "Hanky Panky" and "Sweet Pea" are hits right now.

In addition to playing at school dances the boys also play at some of the nearby places where the young folk are known to gather for dancing and a good time. They have ranged as far south as Manitowoc and have a number of engagements in the Manitowoc area for the immediate future.

With a name like the Morticians it would hardly come as a surprise to learn that they have purchased an old hearse in which they ride to engagements with their instruments.

"It's a good car to use for carrying the organ, amplifiers and other instruments with us when we play," said one of the young musicians.

The "bus" is an old hearse of Jack Stoneman's which was originally painted a sedate brown.

It was later repainted white and when the boys picked it up for their own use, they retouched the spots where the white paint had worn down" to the brown, giving a Guernsey effect.

The hearse is a 1948 Packard, straight eight, and the motor was in excellent condition. Spike as leader is usually the driver, although they all have driver's licenses and can double on the wheel when necessary.

Dan has a special compact organ which he plays in the combo, "one made especially for rock and roll," he said. "It also had a special price," he added.

Southern Door sports fans will recall that Spike was proficient in football, track and basketball during his high school days. He now works at one of the local shipyards.

The young musicians have about \$6,200 invested among them in their equipment and transportation. This was all paid for out of earnings from other jobs as well as their dance engagements.

The boys give out with a real "live" beat and one would-be critic once asked, "Do the Morticians have a 'dead beat'?" Any-one hearing them play would shout, "No!"

What else does Dan Dufek play the organ for at church beside regular worship services? Wed-dings, of course, and what else? You're right - funerals!

Chart-toppers flocked to Sturgeon Bay religiously



Photo contributed

A Sturgeon Bay band called the Morticians—from left, Dan Dufek, Tom Berns, Don Birmingham, Mark Baudhuin and Phil Lampereur—once opened for the Crying Shames at the Corpus Christi Social Hall.

By JOE KNAAPEN
ADVOCATE STAFF REPORTER

If Door County teenagers took their rock 'n roll religiously in the 1960s, it was because a church hall was where most of them danced to top live performers.

The social hall that went up with the new Corpus Christi Catholic Church in 1963 gave local teens and summer visitors a unique, close-up look at the biggest-name bands and singers of the era.

From Polish balladeer Bobby Vinton to the long-haired Byrds, a pantheon of rockers shook, rattled and rolled in the church hall.

Word would spread quickly when there was “a dance at Corpus.” Another chance to do the twist or to frug, boo-ga-loo, Wa-U-wa-a-tusi, hully gully, surf, swim, shimmey and generally “bop ’til you drop.” And after the word spread, the next words would be: “Be there or be square.”

Ironically, the idea to bring rock music to Sturgeon Bay came from a man who didn't even like the sound.

“I don't like rock; I don't go near concerts,” said Rev. Robert Cornell, a part-time assistant pastor at Corpus Christi in the '60s.

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But he combined his past experiences in Philadelphia and contacts in Chicago to sign up bands, giving the kids something to do and helping the parish make use and money out of its new hall.

"The impact was tremendous," said Cornell, a Norbertine priest who is in his 58th year of teaching history at St. Norbert College in De Pere and who was a Democratic congressman from 1975 to 1979. "Kids who came up from Milwaukee and Chicago for the summer couldn't believe we had such big-name groups in this little town."

Vinton, the curly-haired crooner who sang "Blue on Blue" and "Blue Velvet," was the first big name to hit the stage at Corpus.

In those early years, spectators became sophisticated in the nuances of a Stratocaster with a whammy bar and listened for a drummer to beat out the "Wipe Out" roll or an organist to match note-for-note the break in "Runaway."

In 1965, the music at Corpus took a "Turn, Turn, Turn" toward the psychedelic when The Byrds took the stage with their distinctive Rickenbacker guitars twanging through big Vox speakers for songs like "Tambourine Man."

Along the way, surfers Jan and Dean warned about "Dead Man's Curve," the McCoys urged listeners to "Hang on, Sloopy," the Rivas

rejoiced about the warm "California Sun," the Fleetwoods harmonized "Come Softly," and J. Frank Wilson wrung tears out of a "Last Kiss."

The British invasion officially arrived when the duo Chad and Jeremy sang "Willow Weep For Me." And when the Strangeloves from Australia sang "I Want Candy," few in the audience understood that they were talking about a kangaroo.

During a four-year run, Corpus Christi hall echoed with variety as Bobby Bear sang "Memphis" and the Buckingham's let us know it was "Kind of a Drag." There were others: the Ventures, Kings Men, Johnny Tillotson, Bobby Goldsboro, Paul and Paula, Dick and Dee Dee, Tommy James and the Shondells, The Troggs, The Robbs and New Colony Six.

Regional favorites such as Johnny Green and the Greenmen (see separate story) and the Warner Brothers Combo backed up some name artists and occasionally performed on their own.

When the bands got more expensive—costing tens of thousands of dollars, rather than a few hundred, for a single show—Cornell moved his operation to the Brown County Veterans Memorial Arena in Green Bay.

But, by then, Corpus had become "the" place to play.

Local garage bands competed to

play on the stage in front of their friends and neighbors. Many never made it; some did.

One local band, the Muckrakers—Bob Egeland, Mike Hitt, Bill Goettleman and Gary Hartl—warmed up the crowd for the Byrds, Egeland said.

"We were driven by Bob Dylan and stuff we heard from friends who had just come back from San Francisco with a different sound," Egeland said.

Another local band called the Morticians—Don Birmingham, Dan Dufek, Phil Lampereur, Tom Berns and Dick Baudhuin—hit the Corpus Christi stage in 1967.

"We were at Corpus backing up the Crying Shames—you know, 'Sugar and spice and all things nice,'" said Birmingham, who now prefers playing ball with his grandsons at his home in the town of Gardner.


Another local band got its turn in the spotlight in 1967 when the Sturgeon Bay Jaycees sponsored a "battle of the bands" for local groups at Corpus Christi Hall.

Rising out of competition with Sticks and Stones, the Rubber Band and the Fenwick Drum and Bugle Corps were the Morlocs—Dale Crass, Lyle Popour and the late Rick Quam. Their prize for being the best was to return to the stage three months later and play along when Dick Clark's "Happening '67" came to Corpus.

For Door County rock fans, the music never died, it just changed shape and moved to disco halls and outdoor arenas. But they remember the '60s and how Father Cornell brought in their musical heroes, and used the profits for scholarships to help send a lot of kids to school.

Something to think about. Advocate editorials.

GIBRALTAR HIGH SCHOOL
Valentine Hop
**SATURDAY,
 FEBRUARY 12**
 8:30 to 12:00
 COUPLES 1.50 SINGLES \$1
 Music By
THE MORTICIANS



February 10, 1966

DANCING
 — AT THE —
RED VESTS BEER BAR
 4 MILES NORTH OF BRUSSELS
 ON HIGHWAY C
FRIDAY NIGHT
 Music By **THE MORTICIANS**
SATURDAY NIGHT
 Music By **THE SECRETS**
 From Green Bay
SUNDAY AFTERNOON For 2 Hours
 And **SUNDAY EVENING** 8:30 to 1:00
 The MORTICIANS Will Be Back!

June 30, 1966

ANNUAL BRUSSELS
— KERMIS —
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 4
COUN'S BAR AND DANCE HALL
 MUSIC BY THE MORTICIANS
 AFTERNOON AND EVENING
 Dancing 2 to 5 P.M. Afternoon and 9 to 1 A.M. Evening
 SERVING CHICKEN PLATES OR HAM PLATES — \$1
 From 11:30 to 1:00 and 4:30 to 6:30 — Served Inside
 SERVED OUTSIDE —
 TAP BEER, POP, HAMBURGERS, AND HOT DOGS
 Pony Rides For Kiddies — Concession Stands
 Admission \$1 — Good Afternoon and Evening

SEPTEMBER 1, 1966

1858 ORIGINAL BELGIAN 1966
KERMIS
RUBENS' BALLROOM
 ROSIERE
SUN., SEPT. 11
 Afternoon Music By
THE MORTICIANS
 Evening Music By
HARVEY DEGUELLE ORCHESTRA
 Amusements & Concessions
 Meet Your Friends!

September 8, 1966

ROCK AND ROLL DANCE
RUBENS BALL ROOM
 ROSIERE
SUNDAY AFTERNOON, OCT. 23
 MUSIC BY THE MORTICIANS
 Dancing 1:30 to 4:30

October 20, 1966

HARRY'S
PALM GARDENS
DANCE
SAT., NOV. 5th
 Music by
THE MORTICIANS
 Rock and Roll Band
 Adm. 75c Before Nine
 \$1.00 After Nine
 Dancing 8 till 12 o'Clock
Fish Fry and Boiled Trout
Every Friday
 Champion—County Trunk K
 Hall Available for Showers,
 Weddings, Parties.

October 28, 1966

TEEN DANCE
 — AT —
CIRCUS ROOM, Alaska
Sat., May 20 — Morticians
 Dancing 8-12 — Adm. \$1.00
 FREE POPCORN

May 18, 1967

DOOR COUNTY FAIR
Friday Evening — 8:30 to 12:30
 FREE — FREE — FREE
— MIDWAY DANCE —
 Music by The Morticians

August 8, 1967

ANNUAL KERMIS
 at
FOREST VILLA
 Forestville
SUNDAY, OCT. 15
 Teen Age Music by
THE MORTICIANS — 2 to 5 p.m.
 ALSO
THE PENGUINS—Afternoon & Evening
 Fish Lunch — Fri. nite, Oct. 13
 Perch, Trout, Shrimp & Frog Legs
 HALL AVAILABLE FOR BANQUETS, PARTIES,
 WEDDINGS & SHOWERS.
 For bookings call — 856-9465 or 856-2593
 Open daily — 5:00 p.m. — Sat. & Sun — 11:00 a.m.

October 12, 1967

DANCING
 — AT —
BIRCHWOOD GARDENS
 WEST KEWAUNEE
FRIDAY—
THE MORTICIANS
SATURDAY—
THE GRIM REAPER
 FROM MADISON

January 11, 1968

New Year's Eve Party
BIRCHWOOD GARDENS
 WEST KEWAUNEE
 MUSIC BY THE
MORTICIANS
 FREE HATS — HORNS and TRINKETS
 Starting at 9:30 to???
WED., JAN. 1—
THE MORTICIANS
FRI. & SAT. — JAN. 3 & 4—
THE RAVELLES

January 2, 1969

